

Regional Broadband Planning Team Orientation Meeting Minutes

Region 6 – February 2, 2011 (via teleconference)

Region 6 Planning Team (attendees are indicated in **bold**)

Ryan Bekkum, Couleecap, Inc.

Jerry Bloom, Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Dan Braund, CenturyLink

Andy Faust for Dennis Lawrence, North Central Regional Planning Commission

Greg Flogstad, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

Rochelle Hartman, La Crosse Public Library

Joan Pierce for Bruce Mathew, Western Wisconsin Technical College

Tim Rehbein, Vernon County - UW Extension

Deb Rislow, Gundersen Lutheran

Frank Servais, Alliance Bank

Dave Spencer, Airborne Internet

Vicky Vickmeyer (spelling?) for Pat Peterson, Vernon County Unit on Aging

Terry Whipple, Juneau County Economic Development Corporation (JCEDC)

Ken Witt, Sparta

Non-Member attending: Brian Law, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

PSC and LinkWISCONSIN Staff

Peter Jahn, PSC

Judy Klug, PSC

Jeff Richter, PSC

Christopher Larson, PSC

Bill Gillis, LinkWISCONSIN

Lisa LaBorde, LinkWISCONSIN

Welcome and introductions – Judy Klug

We would ask you to give a few sentences on broadband, how it would bring benefits to your community, and any thoughts about this project.

The following comments were made by the RPT team:

Ryan Bekkum, Couleecap, Inc.: They are a non-profit. They have the goal of helping impoverished people get access to things that will improve their lives.

Jerry Bloom, Oakdale Electric Cooperative: They serve a good share of Monroe, Juneau, Sauk, Wood and Jackson counties. Their interest is in new technologies and the need to bring in a lot of data currently not available over backhaul.

Dan Braund, CenturyLink: They are one of the broadband providers in the area. Dan is the area operations manager in La Crosse. His responsibility includes all counties in region 6.

Greg Flogstad, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission: They provide land use planning, economic development services. They are now helping counties with tactical interoperability plans.

Rochelle Hartman, La Crosse Public Library: She is head of the reference department. Her interest is in the digital divide. They manage 40 public computers and see how important internet access is to people. When they give the closing announcement at 5, people are desperate to finish things on the internet.

Andy Faust for Dennis Lawrence, North Central Regional Planning Commission: This involves the southern part of the region that is underserved by broadband.

Joan Pierce for Bruce Mathew, Western Wisconsin Technical College: They have 6 regional learning centers. Students are interested in home delivery of instruction. They are in several counties and home based in La Crosse.

Vicky Vickmeyer for Pat Peterson, Vernon County Unit on Aging: They are mainly interested in how broadband would relate to services for seniors in the area.

Deb Rislow, Gundersen Lutheran: Their interest is watching the migration of services to patient homes – home monitoring equipment.

Frank Servais, Alliance Bank: They have 5 branches in Buffalo and Trempealeau counties. Broadband is important. They are now trying to communicate with 2 cans and a string. He is interested in future developments.

Dave Spencer, Airborne Internet: Their offices just closed. He will be a good resource for providing information on last mile coverage.

Terry Whipple, JCEDC: They are the founders of the Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club model. Their interest is in infrastructure for entrepreneurial activities in rural areas.

Ken Witt, Sparta: City administrator. He is looking at how the government, public and businesses can benefit from broadband.

Ground rules – Chris Larson

The Open Meeting and Public Records information guidelines were reviewed. If the individuals from the RPT wish to disseminate information to the rest of the regional planning team, please forward this to Lisa LaBorde (lisa@researchfirst.com) who will share with all in accordance to the above guidelines. At this time, the work is among the team members. There is a form for the Public if they wish to make comments. We will seek public input at a later date.

Overview – Chris Larson

Funding, goals and objectives of the project were reviewed. We want to find out priorities for each region. We are looking for the issues and gaps, and then the money to help implement the plan. The goal is to organize regionally to prioritize and support planning initiatives. We will assess priorities and develop a plan to implement. We are assessing current availability, adoption and use of broadband. From this we will look at developing targeted strategies to fill current gaps in availability.

? How did you pick the regions?

Chris: We tried to stay close to the boundaries of existing economic planning commissions.

Wisconsin regions and role of RPTs – Bill Gillis

There are nine regions in the state built around economic development teams. The needs are different for each region. Often leaders in the community work in silos; the RPTs bring these leaders together. The role of this team is to work with ongoing work. Local knowledge is essential. The goal is will be to identify and focus on a specific project that this group can accomplish.

Has everyone been able to access the LinkWISCONSIN website? (mostly yes) The site contains a lot of information. We are asking the teams to put together broadband business / investment plans. If you've done such a plan or written a grant, you know that they need to be specific. The goal is to invest in your region to make broadband more available or widely accepted. Investors could be companies (providers), governmental entities (grants). It does not necessarily need to be infrastructure, but awareness programs, computers and others that help advance broadband in the region. We need to know where to start.

Comments from the RPT based on the priority project examples:

Bill Gillis: Jerry, your role at the electric company involves advancing technologies for monitoring and control. Can you talk about the type of investment needed to make that a reality?

Jerry Bloom: Now we have a lot of territory that has access to DSL or broadband. We would interconnect the meter back directly to our servers here. The amount of data is not huge, but it is beyond what we are capable on our current system (radio over power line). We had a joint meeting with telecom and power companies earlier this year. We're not sure if and when we will be mandated to give real time information to our customers.

Bill Gillis: Regarding investments, would there be gaps in broadband where investment would be needed to implement the real time monitoring?

Jerry Bloom: Yes. We have one telecom company putting fiber in to every customer. Several others are offering this. There are areas that do not have good affordable high speed coverage.

Bill Gillis: Rochelle or Ryan – what investment is needed for low income access?

Ryan Bekkum: There is a ton of information on the benefits. Many do not have access in the country or have transportation to get in to the library. Many do have computers, which is good. It makes sense to get the word out.

Rochelle Hartman: We also see those come in without access at home. And there are many who just cannot afford access. Some are bypassing by accessing the internet via cell phones.

Bill Gillis: We'd like your input on that. The trend toward mobile access is a huge consideration.

Rochelle Hartman: The other interesting thing is that sliver of population that doesn't want it. They would be well served, come in and want the information – that's how we find it for them. But they will never touch a computer. They do not necessarily have gray hair. A large number do, but many do not trust, or are afraid, they are not computer literate and some have pride in saying this.

Bill Gillis: Joan, you mentioned you are trying to reach people at home. What does that mean for investments?

Joan Pierce: Two summers ago we went to Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) to discuss distance learning. Our technology is still old. CVTC had used MS SharePoint Live and was successful in getting classes to a pocket of students with good bandwidth, speakers, a headset, etc. It went very well. It is good for those who choose not to come in and live somewhere else. Some places have amazing bandwidth, others have none. We'd love to be able to offer these new things, but don't have an even playing field. We can't offer things without a lot of research to determine if a student can do the course. Capabilities needed are DSL to receive both voice and video. There is a high dial up population in our district. We are successful from a population standpoint with TV courses but we don't want to stay there with that technology.

Bill Gillis: Frank, what does it take to run a bank in terms of connections?

Frank Servais: We have to have connections to the bank. This is done via our own intranet. Going forward, many want mobile or internet banking, which requires high speed technology. Many of the rural areas here are just starting to get DSL. It is not the richest demographic in the state, so the cost can be a deterrent to switch from dial up to DSL. We'd like to use it as a delivery system to our customers. There are others in the area that may or may not be our customers that need access in green field developments.

Bill Gillis: All of these examples are specific. Different applications require different levels of bandwidth, etc. Your job is to come up with a workable business plan of where we start. We will ask you to be specific about the applications.

We need to consider the types of networks already being built. With which geography do we start? Where is our greatest chance of success? Your role is to help us sort through the various priorities. At

the next meeting will focus on some of these ideas. It is not about technology but solving problems in the region. Broadband development plans need the following attributes:

- **Doable:** realistic given available resources
- **Effective:** responsive to regional needs
- **Fundable:** tied to state and national priorities
- **Measurable:** defined benchmarks & accountable actions

The timeline was discussed. We'd like plans finalized by early summer.

Dan Braund: Are you leading a team for each region?

Bill Gillis: Yes, and you are the team for region 6. Once all the regional plans are done we roll this up into a state plan.

Wisconsin mapping /planning process & demonstration – Judy Klug

Mapping has been going on since the beginning of the year. This can be found online: <http://wi.linkamericadata.org/>. The data was reported at the census block level, not the street level, but is better than we had before. LinkWISCONSIN also spent time early on doing interviews to get a lay of the land, and created video vignettes on the website.

Judy shared a view of the maps available online, demonstrating the various aspects. This is built on the Google Maps platform. The overlays show how many providers are in an area. The data is as submitted by providers every six months. Currently it is as of June 2010.

Consumer survey results – Lisa LaBorde

Preliminary results from the Consumer Broadband Survey were reviewed, comparing Region 6 to the state.

Questions from RPT

Dan Braund: What was the sample size and confidence level?

Lisa: The state sample size for these preliminary results was 3,109. Region 6 was 240. These completions permitted a statistically valid study with a 95% confidence level and a + 1.8% margin of error for the Wisconsin results. Various regional data will have confidence levels ranging from a 95% confidence level with a + 3.5% margin of error down to a 95% confidence level with 9% margin of error which would be considered indicative. Generally, a threshold of 95% confidence level and a +5% margin of error would

be considered statistically valid data. Additional results have come in since and will be included in a future report update.

Frank Servais: Regarding internet training, is there less of an opportunity here?

Bill Gillis: We are cleaning up the data. Some of the rural may reflect older populations. You can find out more about why they are not using it. It may be lack of awareness, lack of computer, and we could target activities around that. You can look at it half empty – no desire – or as an opportunity to create awareness.

Rochelle Hartman: Sometimes when I encounter someone like that I mention “remember when microwave ovens came out and you swore you would never use it”?

Bill Gillis: Another example is cell phones, where penetration is way up with low income or seniors.

Vicky Vickmeyer: Aging populations are moving from higher broadband access to our area to retire and are disappointed they are not finding it.

Dan Braund: What is the internet penetration percentage in the state of Wisconsin – around 92%?

Judy Klug: It might be higher.

Dan Braund: 96% have some form of broadband or dial up. Marketing makes people think they need 10 Mb, but the reality is you may need much less than that. Is there a big need for greater bandwidth?

Lisa: There are mixed needs. Some people would be happy with any high speed for certain applications. In the case of hospitals wishing to upload and download x-rays for example there is a need for much greater bandwidth.

Bill Gillis: Even residential consumers are going after higher bandwidth applications like video.

Dan Braund: Regarding satellite service like Big Blue, is that more expensive than traditional DSL? Is it an option or not?

Judy Klug: For many people it is the only option. It often is more expensive. I’ve heard that people who are happy with it are glad to have the connection. The cost may be greater.

Ryan Bekkum: Is satellite considered broadband?

Judy Klug: Yes.

Pete Jahn: It is a different way to classify data.

Dan Braund: Regarding upload speeds, the survey does not address this. It is an up and coming thing. Upload speeds is becoming as needed as download speeds in the healthcare industry.

Bill Gillis: We can send you a matrix of applications requiring various upload and download speeds.

Interactive Broadband Awareness Tool – Bill Gillis

This includes a series of videos on various aspects that broadband may affect, each of which is followed by a brief questionnaire. It is a good tool to use with the community. This may be accessed here:

<http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/lwi/default.aspx?page=52&bhcp=1#Video>.

Priority brainstorming session to be done during a rescheduled face to face session**Assignments, thank yous and closing comments – Judy Klug**

- Please review the website and videos. Send any follow up information to [Lisa LaBorde](#).
- Lisa LaBorde will send a “Doodle.com” invitation to the Region 6 Planning Team members with date options for the face to face meeting targeted to take place during the first week in March.